





OFFICE OF THE
STUDENT
ADVOCATE

Be Informed. Be Connected. Be Empowered.

Parent Leadership Toolkit: Tools for Effective Advocacy

441 4th Street NW, Suite 723N, Washington, DC 20001 | 202.741.4692



studentadvocate.dc.gov |  student.advocate@dc.gov |  @DC_Advocate



Overview

As advocates, leaders, and community members, parents are capable of providing unique grassroots educational leadership in our schools. We cannot create high-quality schools without the partnership of parents. Empowering the voices of parents in our education system is critical to the success of our students.

Creating and establishing parent organizations are a useful and effective way to organize parent voices and amplify their power in the educational landscape. Effective advocacy involves identifying the purpose and objectives of the work in the communities, understanding the issues and opinions behind the causes, investing in the power of the advocates, and strategically leveraging available tools and skills to maximum utility.

This toolkit provides an outline of how to create and establish a parent organization with the right structure, leadership, and procedures for your school through the following steps:

1. Knowing the Issues
2. Understanding the Terms
3. Getting Started
4. Connecting Advocacy to Action, Goal/Agenda Setting, Establishing Mission & Vision
5. Nuts and Bolts – Establishing Procedures and Operations
6. Funding and Budgeting
7. Building Relationships and Partnerships, Establishing Trust, and Fostering Effective Communication
8. Diversity and Recruitment

Step 2: Understanding the Terms

Advocate

Advocate

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary - <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocate>)

- 1: one that pleads the cause of another; *specifically*: one that pleads the cause of another before a tribunal or judicial court
- 2: one that defends or maintains a cause or proposal
- 3: one that supports or promotes the interests of another

Synonyms:

Campaigner

Defender

Promoter

Proponent

Supporter

Spokesperson

Upholder

Advocacy

Advocacy

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary - <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocacy>)

1. the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating something
2. the action of advocating, pleading for, or supporting a cause or proposal
3. the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating something

Synonyms:

Advancement	Recommendation
Assistance	Justification
Backing	Urging
Aid	Champion
Defense	Campaigning for
Encouragement	Upholding
Justification	Pleading for
Promotion	

What is Advocacy?

- Advocacy is active promotion of a cause or principle
- Advocacy involves actions that lead to a selected goal
- Advocacy is one of many possible strategies, or ways to approach a problem
- Advocacy can be used as part of a community initiative, nested in with other components
- Advocacy is not direct service
- Advocacy does not necessarily involve confrontation or conflict

Community Tool Box

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-principles/overview/main>

Ingredients for Effective Advocacy

Include:

- The rightness of the cause
- The power of the advocates
- The thoroughness with which the advocates researched the issues, the opposition, and the climate of opinion about the issue in the community
- Their skill in using the advocacy tools available
- The selection of effective strategies and tactics

Community Tool Box

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-principles/overview/main>

Lobbying

“Lobbying is the practice of trying to persuade legislators to propose, pass, or defeat legislation or to change existing laws”

From: http://www.senate.gov/reference/reference_index_subjects/Lobbying_vrd.htm

“The act of attempting to influence business and government leaders to create legislation or conduct an activity that will help a particular organization.”

From: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/lobbying.html>